

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 7681

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM TOON

E.O. 11652: GDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, IS, US

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR VISIT TO DIMONA

1. AS YOU KNOW, THERE WAS A MINOR DUST-UP HERE DURING THE VISIT OF RIBICOFF AND COMPANY CONCERNING THEIR INTEREST IN VISITING DIMONA. IN A RESTRICTED MEETING WITH RABIN NOVEMBER 7 (WHICH I ATTENDED) SENATORS RIBICOFF AND BAKER PRESSED HARD FOR PERMISSION FOR CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE PARTY TO VISIT DIMONA. RABIN SAID REQUEST GAVE HIM PROBLEMS BUT HE WOULD CONSIDER THE MATTER OVERNIGHT.

2. SUBSEQUENTLY SENATOR RIBICOFF TOLD ME THAT RABIN HAD TELEPHONED HIM THE FOLLOWING MORNING TO SAY THAT HE COULD NOT HONOR THE SENATORS' REQUEST. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT IF HE WERE TO GRANT PERMISSION TO SENATORS BAKER AND GLENN TO VISIT DIMONA HE WOULD FIRST HAVE TO GET CABINET APPROVAL AND POSSIBLY ENDORSEMENT BY THE KNESSET. HE FELT STRONGLY THAT TO AIR THIS PROPOSAL IN THE CABINET WOULD SIMPLY INVITE TROUBLE, AND CERTAINLY IF THE KNESSET WERE TO BE INFORMED THERE WOULD BE SERIOUS CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT'S CHANGE IN A LONG-STANDING POLICY AGAINST ANY VISITS BY OUTSIDERS TO DIMONA. RABIN SAID HE HOPED RIBICOFF WOULD UNDERSTAND HIS POSITION AND WOULD CONVEY HIS REGRETS TO SENATOR BAKER TO WHOM RABIN WOULD SPEAK PRIVATELY AT THE DINNER SCHEDULED THAT EVENING.

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3. RABIN TOLD RIBICOFF THE DECISION TO TERMINATE U.S. VISITS TO

DIMONA WAS MADE IN 1969 AND WAS ON U.S. INITIATIVE. RABIN RECALLED THAT IN 1969 AT A WHITE HOUSE MEETING BETWEEN GOLDA MEIR AND PRESIDENT NIXON WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY YOU IN YOUR CAPACITY AS SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NSC AND RABIN IN HIS CAPACITY AS ISRAELI AMBASSADOR, YOU HAD SUGGESTED TO THE PRESIDENT THAT FURTHER AMERICAN INSPECTION VISITS TO DIMONA WOULD BE UNWISE. THE REASON YOU HAD PROFFERED WAS THAT IF "SOMETHING SHOULD DEVELOP AT DIMONA" THE AMERICANS COULD BE ACCUSED OF COMPLICITY. THIS WOULD BE AN UNDESIRABLE TURN OF EVENTS WHICH WOULD EVOKE SERIOUS CRITICISM OF THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION. THE PRESIDENT HAD CONCURRED IN YOUR REASONING, AND IT WAS DECIDED THEN THAT THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER VISITS TO DIMONA.

4. I TOLD RIBICOFF THAT THIS VERSION OF EVENTS WAS NEW TO ME, ALTHOUGH RABIN AS A DIRECT WITNESS SHOULD KNOW WHAT HE IS TALKING ABOUT. MY UNDERSTANDING WAS THAT WE HAD TERMINATED OUR INSPECTION VISITS TO DIMONA IN 1967 BECAUSE OUR EXPERTS HAD FELT THAT THE ISRAELI RESTRICTIONS ON SUCH VISITS MADE THEM ALMOST USELESS.

5. I BELIEVE BOTH RIBICOFF AND BAKER WILL KEEP LID ON ABOVE, BUT I FELT YOU SHOULD BE INFORMED IN DETAIL AS TO EXCHANGES HERE IN EVENT THERE SHOULD BE LEAKS.
TOON

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